

VZCZCXYZ0001  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHTV #2020/01 2491020  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 051020Z SEP 08  
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8298  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAHQA/HQ USAF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEADWD/DA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/CNO WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI PRIORITY 4354  
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 0960  
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY 4697  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5143  
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY 4350  
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY 2705  
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5113  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 1973  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0194  
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 8956  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 6436  
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 1356  
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 5458  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 7419  
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 0386  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

UNCLAS TEL AVIV 002020

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA  
HQ USAF FOR XXXX  
DA WASHDC FOR SASA  
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA  
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR  
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD  
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD  
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL  
PARIS ALSO FOR POL  
ROME FOR MFO

SIPDIS  
E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

-----  
SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
-----

Mideast

-----  
Key stories in the media:  
-----

The Jerusalem Post reported that Israeli diplomatic officials viewed the four-way summit in Damascus among the leaders of Syria, France, Turkey, and Qatar yesterday with some frustration, saying Syrian President Bashar Assad had effectively broken out of his international isolation without having given anything in return. Maariv reported that Israeli diplomatic sources are blaming PM Ehud

Olmert for this turn of events. Referring to Assad's comment that the reason for the stall in the indirect, Turkish-mediated talks with Israel is the resignation of PM Ehud Olmert's chief of staff Yoram Turbowicz, various media quoted a source in the Prime Minister's Office as saying that the terms of Turbowicz's employment would be worked out in a matter of days. The Jerusalem Post quoted Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan as saying yesterday that the process was continuing "in a positive manner." Leading media reported that the bureaus of PM Olmert and Turkish PM Erdogan agreed that a fifth round of talks would be held in Turkey on September 18-19. The Jerusalem Post and Ha'aretz quoted Assad as saying that his country had given Turkish mediators an outline of general proposals for peace with Israel and was waiting for Jerusalem's response before holding any face-to-face negotiations. Assad was quoted as saying that the document was intended to serve as the basis for direct talks and that he was waiting for a similar document laying out Israel's starting position. The Jerusalem Post quoted Israeli officials who said they were unaware of any such document, while Turkish sources confirmed that Assad gave Erdogan a document on Thursday to pass to the Israelis. The Turkish source, who said he didn't know what six points were included in the paper, said it was probably a crystallization of ideas that had been discussed in the previous four rounds of talks. Leading media reported that, in an interview with Hizbullah's Al-Manar-TV yesterday, Assad stressed that "Syria has no interest in relinquishing its ties with the Islamist group. The Syrian stance towards Hizbullah remains unchanged." "Our attitude toward the resistance is clear wherever it may be; against the occupation in Iraq, Lebanon or Palestine," Assad was quoted as saying. Maariv bannered Assad's comment that direct negotiations with Israel will take place only after President Bush and PM Olmert leave office.

Israel Radio quoted DM Ehud Barak as saying yesterday that he views agreements with all of Israel's neighbors as important, as long as they do not harm Israel's security and other vital interests. Israel Radio reported that yesterday in Como, Italy, President Shimon Peres met with PA President Mahmoud Abbas, and that the two discussed developments in the negotiations.

Israel Radio quoted Hizbullah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah as saying yesterday that his group will not give up its weapons even after Israel withdraws from the Sheba Farms. Yediot quoted him as saying that the revenge for the assassination of Imad Mughniyah would be carried out "in the next few weeks."

Maariv and Israel Radio reported that over the past week Jordan has transferred around 1,000 Kalashnikov rifles and 10,000 bullets to the PA with Israel's assent.

The Jerusalem Post quoted intelligence writer Ronen Bergman as saying in his latest book that Israeli commandoes who carried out the attack on the alleged Syrian nuclear reactor last September were nearly exposed.

Major media reported that French President Nicolas Sarkozy, visiting Assad in Damascus yesterday, brought with him a letter from Noam Shalit to his son Gilad Shalit. Assad is expected to transfer the letter to Hamad bin Khalifa, the Emir of Qatar, who will then transfer it to the Hamas leadership in Gaza. Israel Radio quoted a Qatari newspaper as saying that Hamas's political leader Khaled Mashal received the letter and that he promised to transmit it to Gilad Shalit.

Leading media reported that yesterday a military court in Tel Aviv's IDF headquarters sentenced Louis Balut, the IDF's first Christian tracker, who was convicted of spying for Hizbullah, to 11 years in prison.

A Ha'aretz reader wrote that, and an interview published last week with Naftali Spitzer, Tzipi Livni's husband, who said that his wife has views to the right of Benjamin Netanyahu, as well as Shaul Mofaz's right-wing views, will ensure that Kadima voters will end up with right-wing leadership. Maariv (Ben Caspit) reported that American writer Jerome Corsi, who wrote a book about Sen. John Kerry and the Swift Boat controversy, is now attacking Barack Obama and Tzipi Livni. Caspit hints that American security sources may be behind the criticism.

Maariv reported that next week in Istanbul, Palestinian public figures will debate the Geneva Initiative with a group of minor Shas activists and journalists. The Geneva Initiative organizers are sponsoring the meeting. The newspaper reported that this is the third encounter of its kind.

Ha'aretz reported that yesterday the High Court of Justice instructed the state to formulate a plan that would allow right-wing activists to march through the northern Israeli-Arab town of Umm al-Fahm.

Yediot reported that the Yitzhak Rabin Center for Israel Studies will grant master's degrees in political leadership.

In its lead story, Ha'aretz reported that Maj. Gen. (res.) Moshe Ivri-Sukenik, who resigned as commander of the IDF's Northern Corps earlier this year, has sharply criticized army training. He was quoted as saying that troops are not being prepared for future challenges.

Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that State Comptroller Micha LindeQtrauss may reconsider the issue of the transfer of the "Sergey Compound" in West Jerusalem'sQssianQompound to the Russian government. The paper writes that it now turns out that the actual owners of the compound are Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Ha'aretz and The Jerusalem Post reported that the American open source software system giant and Linux operating software vendor Red Hat announced yesterday that it was purchasing the Israeli start-up Qumranet for about \$115 million.

In an interview with Yediot, Michael Downing, deputy chief of the Los Angeles Police Department, who participated in the indictment of the Israeli Abergil brothers, was quoted as saying that "Israeli organized crime has a very violent potential."

-----  
Mideast:  
-----

Summary:  
-----

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post: "Neither Livni nor Abbas is keen on coming up with a document in the next couple of weeks charting where the sides agree.... If nothing else, the U.S. wants to have at least [General Jones' security document] on the table for the next administration to use when it begins tasking on our issues."

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport and security and intelligence affairs commentator Amit Cohen wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: "Seemingly, Abu Mazen may agree to hold elections in January 2009, with Hamas participation, but the risks are too great."

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized: "Are [Kadima's candidates for prime minister] thinking about continuing the process begun by Olmert? Can Israeli citizens expect a future of positive diplomatic results that will end the long war against Syria and its partners in Lebanon? The answer to both these questions needs to be affirmative if the Kadima and Labor candidates want the public's support."

Block Quotes:  
-----

#### II. "Missing the Deadline"

Diplomatic correspondent Herb Keinon wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (9/5): "Neither Livni nor Abbas is keen on coming up with a document in the next couple of weeks charting where the sides agree. While that type of document would be good for U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, because it would show that her work over the last few months has produced at least some fruit, it would be bad for Livni, because it would show what she had agreed to cede, and bad for Abbas, for it would illustrate to his constituency how far he is from getting what it wants.... U.S. Army General James Jones ... is expected to issue a report to Rice in

about a month that will go a long way in determining the U.S. position on what are Israel's legitimate security requirements -- to ensure that a future Palestinian state is not a threat.... While there probably won't be an interim agreement in two months, or even a shelf agreement by the end of December, the Jones document -- according to diplomatic officials -- will be presented to Rice in the coming weeks, or at least by the end of the Bush administration.

If nothing else, the U.S. wants to have at least that on the table for the next administration to use when it begins tasking on our issues."

II. "Write Down January 9, 2009 in Your Diary; Abu Mazen Ends his Terms -- After Him, a Black Hole"

Military correspondent Amir Rappaport and security and intelligence affairs commentator Amit Cohen wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (9/5): "Israeli security sources despise Abu Mazen -- they dub him a lame duck -- a grey politician lacking charisma, who finds it hard to rule on the ground and lead the Palestinian people.... Hamas continues to scorn the Rais's capacities and views him as a weak figure.... The defense establishment believes that the options at Abu Mazen's disposal don't look promising: Seemingly, Abu Mazen may agree to hold elections in January 2009, with Hamas participation, but the risks are too great. Hamas can certainly win the elections and gain the presidency; the international community and Israel would face an insoluble problem: there will be no other choice than talking with the movement that calls for the annihilation of Israel. On the other hand, the option of holding elections without allowing Hamas to take part in them, under the pretext that the organization does not recognize the Oslo Accords under which the Palestinian Authority was established, is not realistic."

III. "An Israeli Partner Is Needed"

The independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz editorialized (9/5): "Yesterday's four-way summit in Damascus was one of this region's most important diplomatic events for some time.... But this time Israel cannot be angry with the French. After all, it did an about-face as well when it began an indirect dialogue with Syria, which is meant to turn into direct talks at a later stage. In this Israel diverged from the normal framework, under which its relations with the countries in the region are coordinated with the United States. This is even more blatant in the case of Syria, as Israeli lobbying significantly affected American attitudes toward Damascus. However, beyond the settling of scores between Jerusalem, Washington and Paris, the dialogue with Syria has opened a serious new window of opportunity.... Of course, the concerns and suspicions raised by the opponents of dialogue with Syria should not be ignored. Most importantly, it is important to evaluate the price Israel will have to pay for an agreement with Syria. But there will be time for this when the direct negotiations begin and the Israeli public, which recognizes that Israel will have to withdraw from the Golan Heights, learns what it will get in return. In the meantime, it seems that if there is an obstacle to the talks, it comes from the Israeli side.... Are [Kadima's candidates for prime minister] thinking about continuing the process begun by Olmert? Can Israeli citizens expect a future of positive diplomatic results that will end the long war against Syria and its partners in Lebanon? The answer to both these questions needs to be affirmative if the Kadima and Labor candidates want the public's support."

CUNNINGHAM